

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 SAJ-01 AID-20 PC-10 IO-14 DRC-01

EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 FEA-02 /133 W

----- 013718

O 231347Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3560

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA UNN

DIA

CINCPAC

SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 8444

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: FROM THE FIRST SANYA GOVERNMENT TO THE SECOND

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: THE FIRST SANYA GOVERNMENT QUICKLY RETURNED THE COUNTRY TO NORMAL AFTER THE SUDDEN CALLAPSE OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT IN OCTOBER 1973. THIS GOVERNMENT FULFILLED ITS PRIMARY MISSION OF DRAFTING A NEW PERMANNET CONSTITUTION AND DID A CREDITABLE JOB OF COPING WITH THE COUNTRY'S IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S GREATEST FAILING WAS ITS INABILITY TO PROJECT A PUBLIC IMAGE OF DECISIVENESS. THE GOVERNMENT'S EXHAUSTION WITH THE PUBLIC'S DEMANDS UPON IT AND SANYA'S DESIRE TO HOLD THE ORIGINAL CABINET TOGETHER BROUGHT ABOUT HIS RESIGNATION ON MAY 21. THE UNANIMOUS DECISION OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) MAY 23 TO ASK SANYA TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE HIM RENEWED CONFIDENCE THAT HE HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC AND THE LEGISLATURE. ASSUME THAT HE AGREES TO LEAD A NEW GOVERNMENT, SANYA SHOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION THAN BEFORE TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY, BUT THERE IS A DANGER THAT MATTERS WILL BE ALLOWED TO DRIFT IF ELECTIONS ARE POSTPONED TOO LONG. SANYA CANNOT CHANGE HIS CHARACTER AT THIS POINT, BUT IT MAY WELL BE THAT HIS CRITICS, SOBERED BY THE EVENTS OF THE PAST TWO DAYS, WILL GIVE HIM A SECOND HONEYMOON AND EASE OFF THEIR ATTACKS. END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN SANYA THAMMASAK ACCEPTED THE KING'S REQUEST TO LEAD AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER 73 CALLAPOSE OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT, HE ACCEPTED A NARRO MANDATE. HIS PRINCIPAL TASK WAS TO DRAFT A NEW PERMANENT CONSTITUTION AND TO PREPARE FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS WITHIN SIX MONTHS. SANYA QUICKLY SELECTED A CABINET WHICH REPRESENTED BOTH THE REGIME AND NEWCOMERS. THERE IS SOME INDICATION THAT OTHERS, PERHAPS GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, IMPOSED ON SANYA A FEW CABINET MEMBERS WHOM HE WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE CHOSEN. THE COUNTRY RETURNED TO NORMAL WITHIN A FEW DAYS, AND SANYA'S CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEE SUBMITTED ITS COMPLETED WORK TO THE NLA THREE MONTHS LATER.

2. AS THE WEEKS PASSED THE PUBLIC BEGAN TO EXPECT MORE AND MORE FROM THE SANYA GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT
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BECAME THE TARGET OF AN INCREASING VOLUME OF CRITICISM. MUCH OF THIS CRITICISM FOCUSED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE ECONOMY, PARTICULARLY ITS FAILURE TO HALT INFLATION. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT DID LITTLE TO KEEP PRICES FROM RISING, THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THE INFLATION WERE EXTERNAL AND BEYOND ITS CONTROL.

3. ACTUALLY THE SANYA GOVERNMENT DID A GOOD JOB OF HANDLING

CONCRET ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WHEN THE GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN THE PRICE OF RICE AT GOVERNMENT OUTLETS AND ON THE FREE MARKET CAUSED QUEUS AT THE GOVERNMENT STORES AND RAISED UNFOUNDED FEARS OF A RICE SHORTAGE, THE GOVERNMENT TOOK EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. IT RAISED THE CONTROLLED RICE PRICE FROM 40 BAHT TO 50 BAHT AND SLOWED THE RATE OF RICE EXPORTS BY CUTTING THE EXPORT QUOTA IN HALF AND RAISING THE EXPORT PREMIUM. THE EFFECT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS WAS A FALL IN THE FREE MARKET RICE PRICE AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CONCERN ABOUT SUPPLY.

4. THE WORLD OIL CRISIS FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO RAISE PRICES AND TO INTORDUCE A PRIORITYSYSTEM OF ALLOCATION. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DIESEL, WHICH HAD ITS GREATEST EFFECT ON FISHERMEN, THERE WERE NO SERIOUS SHORTAGES, HOWEVER. THE GOVERNMENT AVERTED A FISHERMEN'S STRIKE BY ALLOCATING MORE DIESEL TO THEM AND BY REDUCING THE DUTY ON IMPORTED FISHING GEAR.

5. IT IS TRUE THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT DID NOT UNDERTAKE ANY LONG-TERM PROGRAMS TO FUNDAMENTALLY REFORM THE THAI ECONOMY, BUT THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH TO EXPECT OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WITH A LIMITED MANDATE AND A CAUTIOUS LEADER. NEVERTHELESS FINANCE MINISTER BUNMA WONGSAWAN'S MODEST TAX INCREASES WERE A FIRST-EVER ATTEMPT TO USE THE TAX SYSTEM TO REDISTRIBUTE INCOME TO THE POORER PEOPLE IN THAILAND. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT ALSO REVITALIZED THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT BOARD WHICH HAD BECOME DORMAN UNDER RENU SUWANNASIT. UNDER THE NEW LEADERSHIP OF DR. SANO UNAKUN THE NESDB IS NOW BEGINNING TO TAKE A LOOK AT LONG-RANGE PROBLEMS.

6. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S RECORD IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS
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ALSO SOUND. BY AVOIDING TOO CLOSE A PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION WITH THE UNITED STATES (BUT PRESERVING OUR BASIC RELATIONSHIP) AND BY EXPANDING CONTACTS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES (THOUGH NOT EMBRACING THEM), THE SANYA GOVERNMENT LARGELY SATISFIED THOSE THAI WHO WANT A MORE INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY WITHOUT FRIGHTENING MORE CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS, SUCH AS THE MILITARY. THE US-THAI AGREEMENT TO REDUCE U.S. FORCES IN THAILAND BY 10,000 MANPOWER SPACES BY THE END OF 1974 WAS A CONSIDERABLE HELP TO THE SANYA GOVERNMENT AND NEUTRALIZED THIS TOPIC AS A MAJOR ISSUE FOR THE PRESENT.

7. WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS THE SANYA GOVERNMENT DID A REASONABLY GOOD JOB OF MAINTAINING PEACE AND ORDER. GENERAL KRIT SIWARA ASSURED MILITARY SUPPORT FOR THE NEW

GOVERNMENT AND HELPED TO DEBUNK THE COUP RUMORS WHICH AROSE PERIODICALLY. STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, ESPECIALLY DURING THE THANAKA VISIT, CAUSED SOME UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO CONTROL THEM, BUT STUDENTS HAVE SINCE THEN LARGELY HEEDED SANYA'S GENTLE WARNINGS NOT TO GO TOO FAR. THE STEADY STREAM OF PETITIONERS FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE WHO CAME TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PAROCHIAL PROBLEMS DID LITTLE TO ENHANCE THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC IMAGE OR SELF-CONFIDENCE. A RELATIVELY HIGH CRIME RATE, ESPECIALLY IN BANGKOK, HAS CAUSED SOME APPREHENSION ALTHOUGH CRIME FIGURES HAVE LEVELED OFF RECENTLY (BANGKOK 8277).

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AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

Z/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 995

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMOSUL UDRON 1732
AMCONSUL SONGKHLA UNN
CINCPAC
DIA
SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 8444

8. THE FIRST SANYA GOVERNMENT'S GREATEST FAILING WAS IN
PUBLIC RELATIONS. IT NEVER SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING THE
IMAGE OF STRONG LEADERSHIP AND MASTERY OF THE SITUATION
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WHICH THE THAI EXPECT OF THEIR LEADERS. EVEN ITS ECONOMIC
SUCCESES DID NOT CONVINCE THE PUBLIC THAT IT WAS
SUCCESSFULLY COPING WITH THE COUNTRY'S INFLATION TO THE
EXTENT POSSIBLE. NEITHER DID SANYA'S FREQUENT TALK OF
RESIGNATION AND HIS VISITS TO THE KING FOR REASSURANCE AT
EACH SIGN OF CRISIS PERSUADE THE PUBLIC THAT HE WAS IN
COMMAND OF THE SITUATION.

9. THE PROBLEMS WHICH FINALLY BROUGHT ABOUT THE GOVERN-
MENT'S RESIGNATION WERE NOT SO SERIOUS IN THEMSELVES.
RATHER SANYA MADE THEM INTO INSOLUBLE PROBLEMS. THE
RESIGNATION OF A DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER AND THE DECISION
ON WHETHER TO APPOINT A CONTROVERSIAL UNIVERSITY RECTOR
SHOULD NOT HAVE CAUSED A SERIOUS CABINET CRISIS. BUT
SANYA, EXHAUSTED BY A RISING VOLUME OF PUBLIC CRITICISM
AND DEMANDS, LACKED THE DECISIVENESS TO DEAL PRAGMATICALLY
WITH THESE ISSUES. HE HURRIED OFF TO SEE THE KING AT
HUA HIN MAY 15 IN THE HOPE THAT THE KING WOULD RELEASE
HIM FROM HIS AWFUL BURDEN. INSTEAD THE KING ADVISED HIM
TO CARRY ON AND TO ALLOW THOSE MINISTERS WHO WISHED TO LEAVE
THE CABINET TO DO SO. NEVERTHELESS WHEN FINANCE MINISTER
BUNMA WONGSAWAN, WHO HAD BEEN A CONSTANT SOURCE OF STRENGTH
TO SANYA, ASKED TO RESIGN MAY 20, SANYA DECIDED TO THROW
IN THE TOWEL. FOLLOWING HIS LEAD, THE ENTIRE CABINET
AT ITS REGULAR MAY 21 MEETING AGREED TO RESIGN EFFECTIVE
MAY 22. BUT WITHIN HOURS OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF
THE CABINET DECISION, SUPPORT FOR SANYA'S CONTINUATION
IN OFFICE BEGAN TO BUILD AMONG NLA MEMBERS AND OTHERS.
THE NLA MET IN A CLOSED SESSION MAY 23 AND UNANIMOUSLY
DECIDED TO RECOMMEND SANYA'S REAPPOINTMENT AS PRIME
MINISTER IN A NEW GOVERNMENT.

10. IF SANYA CONTINUES AS PRIME MINISTER, AS IT NOW
APPEARS HE WILL, HE WILL HAVE A FREER HAND IN FORMING A
NEW CABINET. HE CAN ELIMINATE INEFFECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE
FORMER CABINET WITHOUT FEELING THAT HE HAS BETRAYED THEIR

LOYALTY. SINCE THE NLA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ASKING TO
STAY ON, HE CAN, IF HE WANTS AND IF HE PROVES CAPABLE OF IT,
COMMAND ITS SUPPORT FOR HIS NEW GOVERNMENT AND
ASKE SOME PROMINENT NLA MEMBERS TO JOIN THE NEW CABINET. THE
NLA VOTE WILL ALSO GIVE HIM A LARGER MANDATE TO DEAL
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DECISIVELY WITH THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS.

11. IN SPITE OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES, THERE IS STILL THE
DANGER THAT THE NEXT SANYA GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO
DRIFT AS THE FIRST ONE DID, AND THAT PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR
IMPOSSIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS WILL CONTINUE. IF SO, THE NLA
MAY SOON FORGET THAT IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SANYA'S
CONTINUATION IN OFFICE AND GO ITS OWN WAY. NOR WILL THE
COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS BE EASY TO SOLVE EVEN WITH NLA SUPPORT.
AND, OF COURSE, SANYA IS TOO OLD TO CHANGE. HE IS LIKELY
TO REMAIN A GOOD, HONEST, RELIGIOUS MAN, BUT HE CANNOT
BECOME ONE WHO IS FORCEFUL AND DYNAMIC. THE MAN'S HOPE
IS THAT HIS EARLIER CRITICS, SOBERED BY HOW CLOSE THEY
HAVE DRIVING THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT TO THE BRINK, WILL EASE OFF
THEIR ATTACKS. THIS NEW ATTITUDE, COUPLED WITH A BETTER
CABINET, MAY WELL SEE SANYA THROUGH.

12. THE MOST LIKELY OUTCOME OF THE CURRENT CABINET CRISIS
IS THAT SANYA WILL LEAD A RE-FORMED CARETAKER GOVERNMENT
UNTIL THE NLA APPROVES THE CONSTITUTION AND ELECTIONS ARE
HELD. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT ELECTIONS WILL TAKE
PLACE SOMETIME BETWEEN LATE 1974 AND EARLY 1975. GIVEN
SANYA'S RELUCTANCE TO LEAD THE COUNTRY AND THE CONTINUED
PROBLEMS HIS NEW GOVERNMENT WILL FACE, IT WOULD
OBVIOUSLY BE BETTER IF THE ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE SOONER
RATHER THAN LATER.
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Message Attributes

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